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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; FRENCH PRESIDENT-ELECT NICOLAS SARKOZY'S  
FOREIGN POLICY; SECRETARY RICE TO RUSSIA; UK PM TONY BLAIR LEGACY;  
05/16/07; BUENOS AIRES

#### 11. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Major international stories today include French President-elect Nicolas Sarkozy's expected foreign policy; US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's trip to Russia; and UK PM Tony Blair's legacy.

#### 12. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Sarkozy, with his eyes placed on Europe and also in Washington"

Patricia Arana, on special assignment in Paris for daily-of-record "La Nacion," wrote (05/16) "Nicolas Sarkozy's top foreign policy priorities will be his ties to the EU, the US, Russia and China, the Mediterranean countries and Africa, in this order... His diplomatic action will sway between continuity (of long-standing policies) and the introduction of new world approaches.

"Obviously enough, the question is to what extent his foreign policy will entail his purpose of breaking with the past.

"... If Jacques Chirac seemed to have a world view of international politics..., Sarkozy seems to have a more constrained range of action, in which major priorities will be his ties to Europe and the US. According to French political analyst Bertrand Badie, 'he has a limited knowledge of societies of other hemispheres and, in spite of his pro-Israeli fondness, he never committed to the conflicts that dramatically mark the evolution of our world.'

"In Washington, they expressed satisfaction following the announcement of Sarkozy's victory. President George W. Bush called him on the same day to congratulate him and the president-elect devoted one paragraph of his speech to the US-French relationship.

"That night, Sarkozy said 'A friendly and allied country,' (referring to the US). His attitude breaks with the tradition established by Charles de Gaulle, which Chirac fully honored by opposing the war in Iraq in 2003. With Sarkozy, Washington may rely on having one more ally in Europe.

"Regarding the Middle East, one can expect that France's clout will lessen, particularly because Sarkozy does not have the personal ties Chirac used to have with several Arab leaders.

"The new president underscored that his concern over Israel's security includes the creation of an 'independent' Palestinian State, although he added that it is in the EU 'that the French policy on the Middle East should manifest itself.'

"... His ties to Moscow promise to be frozen. More than once, Sarkozy criticized Russia's conflict with Chechnya. Additionally, his victory in the French presidential election did not go down well

in Russia.

"Latin America, which was absent from his election campaign, should not expect major changes in its ties to France."

- "Rice and Putin, far from reaching an understanding, only managed to agree on rhetorical issues"

Business-financial "InfoBae" reports (05/16) "(US Secretary of State) Condoleezza Rice's visit to Russia only served to demonstrate the deep disagreement between Moscow and Washington, even if both countries will now downplay their rhetoric."

"... When arriving in Moscow, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice did not hide her interest in rebuffing versions that a new Cold War was emerging between Washington and Moscow.

"While she asserted that her meetings with the Kremlin's main government officials and Russian President Vladimir Putin himself were fruitful, both parties did not make much progress in reaching agreement on sensitive issues for their own interests.

"While Rice asserted that 'we will have points of disagreement, but there is no doubt that the (bilateral) relationship needs to be free from exaggerated rhetoric,' strong expressions were heard again when dealing with the 'thorny issues' between the two countries that were in conflict after the Second World War.

"The White House purpose of installing a radar system in the Czech Republic and a group of interceptive missiles in Poland as the first elements of an antimissile shield are seen by the Kremlin as a threat to its own security and the regional strategic balance as well as a dangerous US step forward in its former area of influence."

- "Blair's legacy and farewell"

Leading "Clarín" editorializes (05/16) "After ten years in government, UK PM Tony Blair has finally announced his expected decision to leave power in the next weeks.

"... Blair has left strong accomplishments as the leader of the renewed Labor Party... He epitomizes for the European left wing what Margaret Thatcher did for conservatives of past decades.

"He managed to reform the country's agenda and the domestic and foreign political debate, made the economy more competitive and modernized the British society. He also imposed a greater rapprochement with Europe and an active commitment to Northern Ireland's peace process.

"Nonetheless, his luck started to change following his decisive alignment with the US in invading Iraq based on arguments that were then rebutted by events. His international image was irreversibly tainted by the outcome of that war, which casts a shadow over his farewell."

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